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THE NEED OF A HIGHER STANDARD OF EDUCATION
IN THE UNITED STATES.

A N A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Philokalian and Philomathean Societies

O F

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,

B Y

GEO. WM. BROWN.

BALTIMORE:
STEAM PRESS OF WILLIAM K. BOYLE,

Corner of Baltimore and St. Paul Streets.

1869.

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BALTIMORE, *August 3rd*, 1869.

GENTLEMEN :

As your very kind notes ask for the same thing, that is a copy for publication of the Address which I had the honor of delivering recently before your Societies, one reply to both will, I hope, be considered appropriate.

It gives me great pleasure to place the Address at your disposal, and I shall feel highly gratified if it shall prove of any service in the cause which I have much at heart and in which St. John's College is a faithful and efficient laborer, that of a higher and better Education in the State of Maryland.

With sincere wishes for the prosperity of both Societies,

I am, very faithfully,

Your Friend,

GEO. WM. BROWN.

MESSRS.

L. A. WILMER,	} <i>Executive Committee of</i>
J. D. HAINES AND	
J. S. WIRT,	

the Philokalian Society.

WM. E. THOMPSON,	} <i>Executive Committee of</i>
J. GRATTAN HAGNER AND	
S. GARNER,	

the Philomathean Society.

A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN OF THE PHILOKALIAN AND PHILOMATHEAN
SOCIETIES OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE :

It gave me great pleasure to accept the honor you conferred upon me in inviting me to address you on this interesting anniversary, although the time allowed for preparation was so short as to make me feel apprehensive that I should not be able to do justice either to the occasion or myself. But in accepting the invitation, I did what I certainly should not advise you to adopt as a general rule of conduct—that is, I took counsel of my feelings rather than of my judgment. I say of my feelings, because education has always been to me a subject of deep interest; and it is no exaggeration to assert that to-day the cause of liberal education in Maryland is closely identified with the cause of St. John's College.

Now what is education? The etymology of the word explains its meaning. In its largest sense it means the drawing out, or rather it indicates the more gentle process of *leading out* or developing all the faculties—intellectual, moral and physical—of the human being. It is undoubtedly true that very much of the best and most important education of every one, is derived from other

sources than the direct instruction of professional teachers; and most fortunate is it for the human family that it is so. [A good mother is the best of all teachers, for her lessons begin earlier and their impressions last longer than all others. The family, the play-ground, society, business, pleasure, all our wants, our trials, our joys and sorrows, nature in all its aspects—the stern as well as the gentle, the terrific as well as the beautiful—and, above all, the constantly recurring necessity of labor for the supply of our wants and the support of existence, are daily and effective educators. And it is one of the most striking proofs of the beneficent plan on which the world is ordered, that so much is thus learned by those who have no other teachers. How often do we see sound judgment in the ordinary affairs of life, a nice sense of honor, the power of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and loyalty to truth and duty, in those who have received no education from books, and can neither read nor write! But while noble natures may thus learn much that is most valuable, they are compelled not only to remain in ignorance of many things that every one should know, but to continue always in a condition of intellectual childhood. The glories of literature and the wonders of the universe are to them sealed books. The heavens, instead of being illimitable space studded with countless worlds, are only a blue arch, the sun a ball of fire, the moon a silver lamp, and the stars twinkling tapers set on high to illumine the night; while science, history, philosophy and poetry are names that, to their minds, do not even represent ideas.

And so I come to the proposition, which in this presence I might have assumed as an indisputable truth, that in this age and country education, as the term is generally

understood—that is, direct instruction by the means of books and living teachers, is of indispensable necessity to every human being. It has indeed become, or is fast becoming in all civilized countries, an accepted opinion that every child born into the world is entitled to receive from the State such an education as will fit it to perform at least the ordinary duties of life. And to be efficient it must begin early; for, as the wise son of Sirach long ago wrote, “If thou hast gathered nothing in thy youth, how canst thou find any thing in thine age?” But although it should begin early, it should not end early, as we are told by the same eloquent moralist, who adds in another place, “My son, gather instruction from thy youth up: so shalt thou find wisdom till thy old age.”

It is unfortunately true, however, that this duty of the State to provide for the education of all her children was very tardily recognized in Maryland, and has never, I believe, been efficiently carried out except in the City of Baltimore.

Let us see how the matter stands with regard to St. John's College. In the year 1704, that is one hundred and sixty-five years ago, was founded a “free school in Anne Arundel town, (now Annapolis,) upon the Severn river,” known as “King William School,” which afterwards for seventy-one years seems to have done its unpretending work faithfully and with good success until it was merged in St. John's College; of which it may therefore be considered the precursor, if not the parent. The College had an auspicious commencement. In 1784 it received a liberal charter from the State, and in 1789 commenced operations with the modest endowment of thirty-two thousand dollars, the voluntary contribution of many of the best and most distinguished citizens of the

State at that time: but its main reliance was upon the annual grant from the State of seventeen hundred and fifty pounds current money to be applied to the payment of salaries, which the State in the charter of the College solemnly guaranteed should be forever continued. It is not a pleasant incident in our history that in the year 1806 the General Assembly violated this pledge, on the faith of which individuals had been induced to subscribe the sum I have mentioned, and not only withheld the annual stipend, but passed an act assuming formally to repeal and annul the contract stipulating for its payment and contained in the charter. These facts I have taken from the forcible and manly appeal to the people of Maryland by the Visitors and Governors of St. John's College, made during the last year, and the same paper truly adds: "Well did William Pinkney, who eloquently but vainly remonstrated against the passage of the act, predict that 'the day which witnessed the degradation of St. John's College,' in the very dawn of its promise, would prove 'the darkest day Maryland had known,' for by this act her citizens would be deprived at once of a college to which they could point with pride for what it had already done, and with hope for the greater good it might do in the future."

For this great wrong, perpetrated more than fifty years ago—a wrong to her own honor as well as to the best and highest interests of the people—the State in later days has made tardy and partial amends; and it is by virtue of this late repentance and its fruits that a reviving life has been imparted to this institution, and that we are here to-day to celebrate an annual commencement under fairer auspices than have dawned since the disastrous era of 1806.

But what has been the consequence? Simply that from that day to this there has been no college in Maryland adapted to supply completely the wants of those who desired to receive a more liberal education than could be furnished by ordinary schools and academies. Noble and vigorous efforts have from time to time been made by various religious denominations to establish institutions of learning of a high character, but some have ceased to exist and none have been more than partially successful, and the great educational want to which I have alluded still remains unsupplied.

Indeed, the only successful institution which has yet been established in Maryland for the cultivation of the higher branches of learning and science, as well as of art, is the "Institute," founded in Baltimore by the munificence of that good and illustrious man, George Peabody. It is not a college; but it supplies much that no college can furnish. Already an admirably selected library, which has cost more than one hundred thousand dollars and is daily increasing, has been collected, and is accessible to all readers without charge; a conservatory of music, like those which are to be found in the great cities of Europe, has been commenced with the fairest prospect of success; annual courses of lectures on scientific and literary subjects by the ablest men who can be procured, are open to the public at a price which is merely nominal, and a school of design will be established as soon as proper arrangements can be made. For these great undertakings one million of dollars has already been given, and I am not violating any confidence when I add that the same munificent donor designs in his lifetime to add further gifts, not only to the Institute, but to the other noble institutions which he has founded which may need

additional aid for their full development, and out of his vast fortune to reserve for himself what, for one situated as he is, is only a moderate competence. In a single life to have amassed a great fortune by industry, integrity and a comprehensive grasp and knowledge of commercial affairs, and then to spend it greatly in works of lasting munificence, wisely planned for the good of the human race, is to live two lives, in the best sense of the Latin poet:

“Hoc est
Vivere bis, vita posse priori frui.”

And I cannot forbear to add that a great university hereafter to be established in Baltimore, has been planned by the wealthiest of her citizens, a native of this county, and at some future day we may confidently expect that it will be so liberally endowed out of his large fortune as to enable it to take rank among the first and most useful universities in the land. But in the meantime the youth of Maryland are growing up with every year, and are asking for the daily bread of knowledge, which, so far as they are concerned, must be supplied now, or not at all.

I know of no institution so well adapted to satisfy this want as St. John's College. Annapolis, being not only the capital of the State, but the site of the Naval Academy, which is so munificently supported by the government of the United States, has become the resort of many of the most distinguished and cultivated persons in the State and in the nation. It is fortunate in having a climate mild, yet sufficiently bracing, and more than usually healthy. While it is near the great capitals on the Atlantic coast, it is removed from the temptations to idleness and dissipation which they unavoidably present, and it has a refined and polished society of its own.

The very fact that the college is beginning a new life gives it certain advantages, for, while it has an established position, it is not bound as closely as the institutions which have been longer organized, to the traditions of the past. In education, as in everything else, methods change with the growth of knowledge and the changing wants of mankind. I know that Dr. Samuel Johnson said, in his dogmatical way, that "education was as well understood by the ancients as ever it can be," but I am quite sure that even Aristotle, if he were living, or Dr. Johnson himself, would not feel competent to decide the various new and difficult questions which are now agitating the minds of all who are interested in the subject. I say new, because, although many are old enough in themselves, they have assumed new importance in view of the necessities of the times, and difficult, because they go to the very root of the system. Here are some of them: What are the branches proper to be taught in college, and how are they to be taught? Is there too much Greek and Latin? I dare say some of you think there is; but if there is, is a little of any value whatever? What place should modern languages occupy, and what the Anglo-Saxon? What the physical sciences and what the mathematics? Shall mental and moral philosophy, logic, history, political economy and belles-lettres form a part of the course? And as the list is too long for any class to master in four years, is the principle of elective studies to be introduced, and if so, who is to make the election? Will not the majority of students select the courses which are the easiest and shortest? This was the experience of Professor Goldwin Smith, at Oxford, and probably it would not be very different at St. John's, although, after having tried it, he favors that system within certain

bounds. Then there is the perplexing and important question of religious training, of what kind it should be, and how far it should go. If a college is sectarian, it becomes almost necessarily narrow and one-sided; and if it is not sectarian, there is danger of its having no religion at all. The question of discipline is quite as difficult as the others. Shall the system of the German universities, where there is no control at all over the conduct of students, be adopted; or the military system, where the control is rigid and constant, and yet is coupled with a sense of individual honor and responsibility, and can only be carried out with the co-operation of the students themselves; or the academical system, which is between the two, and has some of the advantages and disadvantages of both? Shall physical training be made a part of the course; and if it is, shall it consist only of athletic sports and gymnastic exercises, or shall it include military drill, or, as in Cornell University, which is an experiment on a new plan, mechanical employment also?

I mention these important questions without attempting to solve them, and without even venturing to express an opinion with regard to any, for I doubt not they are occupying the thoughts of those who are engaged in shaping the future of this Institution, and who have a far larger experience and wider knowledge of the subject than any to which I can lay claim.

But whatever may be the system adopted, there can be no doubt, I think, that it should have two principal aims, the one to bring together a competent corps of professors, some of whom, if possible, should be teachers in the largest sense, that is, should have the ability and the leisure too, to add something by their writings and discoveries to the world's stock of literature and science;

while the second and chief should be to send forth every year into the community a body of upright, refined and highly cultivated young men, prepared to do their share of work in some one of the many avocations of life and in the larger sphere of society and the world. And this brings me to the subject which forms my principal theme. "The Need of a Higher Standard of Education in the United States."

The general diffusion of intelligence and of the rudiments of learning in this country has attracted the attention of all travellers. Undoubtedly better schools, better academies, better colleges and better universities are to be found elsewhere, and very great differences exist in the educational institutions in different parts of our own country, and consequently in the attainments of the inhabitants themselves; but no one who has visited other parts of the world can fail to be struck with the general intelligence of the Americans as a people. Very much of this is owing, not to schools, but to our political institutions. The feeling of political equality, the ballot-box and jury-box, the deep interest taken by all in public affairs, the discussions in public and debates in private on those affairs, the religious meetings and controversies, and philanthropic enterprises, the general diffusion of the necessities and even the comforts of life, the abundance of books adapted to the popular taste, and more than all, the newspapers, constitute a means of elevating the masses such as no other country possesses or ever has possessed, and the fruit is abundantly shown in the character and bearing of the people, and in their superior refinement.

It is not necessary to go abroad to be convinced of this, for any one who has compared the immigrants who flock

to our shores from nearly every country of Europe with the corresponding classes in our own, and who has observed the great improvement which those immigrants soon exhibit after they have come under the influence which here surrounds them like an atmosphere, cannot fail to arrive at the same conclusion.

But when we extend the view from the masses to the more highly cultivated classes, the comparison is not so favorable to ourselves. We then discover that there is something peculiar and unsymmetrical in our civilization; that the base is broad, but that the superstructure is not high; that we have erected a temple without a dome, a column without a capital, a spire without a pinnacle.

Those who devote themselves to learning, literature and science, and not to some practical profession or business by which money is to be made, are very few indeed. The training even of those who take degrees at colleges and universities, is general and superficial rather than accurate and profound. It certainly was so in my day, as I remember with sorrow; and although an improvement has taken place since then, the same defect, though in a less degree, prevails now, and exists likewise in the preparation of candidates for professional life. What a small store of knowledge does it require to become a licensed lawyer, or physician, or preacher; and who would venture to accept the ordinary college diploma, or a license to practice or preach, as a proof that its owner is possessed of any valuable knowledge or skill whatever? In these respects we differ from the leading countries of Europe, where, with a less enlightened people, are to be found a large class of learned and scientific men, and where the entrance into the professions is guarded with a more jealous care.

It may be thought that scholars and learned men will appear in good time when they are needed, and I fully believe that they will come in time; but it would be well, if possible, to hasten their coming, for they are much needed now. The great want of the nation is of a large number of high-toned and highly cultivated men in every walk of life, in the pursuits of agriculture and business, literature and science, on the bench and at the bar, in the pulpit, the sick chamber and school-room, and especially in the higher departments of political life.

It would occupy far more time than the occasion would justify, if I should attempt to exhibit this want in the extent to which I have stated that it exists, and I shall therefore confine my remarks to two departments—those of literature and politics.

I have no disposition whatever to depreciate American literature, and with pleasure recognize the advances it has made in the last fifty years; and yet the most enthusiastic American must acknowledge that, in comparison with our extraordinary growth in wealth, population and power, our prowess in war and our success in industrial pursuits, our achievements in literature have been small, and are so regarded by the rest of the world. Let us examine for a moment the ground on which perhaps we are strongest,—our newspapers. In parts of the country where there are writers of no other kind, there are at least writers for the newspapers, and it would be unfair not to admit that they often exhibit a great deal of talent. Much of our literature is a close imitation of that of England, and, like all imitations, is inferior to the original, but the American newspaper is a hardy growth of our own soil. In its strong practical sense, its dry and often grotesque humor, its vigor of expression and breadth of view, it is pecu-

liarly American. And these newspapers, which in number are like the leaves of the trees, which circulate everywhere and form the chief intellectual food of the people, thus become their most efficient educators. This is not stating the case too strongly. They daily spread before the community the contemporaneous history of the world—certainly the most important and interesting part of history to us who are living and acting to-day—gathered with pains and expense from the four quarters of the globe, and presented in a condensed and intelligible form; not always true, to be sure, but then, what history, ancient or modern, is so? And if it be false, the error of to-day will perhaps be corrected by the mail or telegram of to-morrow. Scraps of literature, science and art, of wit and humor, of religion, morality, politics, law and medicine, of everything, in short, in which their readers or any class of readers take an interest, appear from time to time in their ample columns. As vehicles of general information, the newspapers of the continent of Europe cannot be compared with them, and those of Great Britain are only beginning to rival them.

But there are other qualities in which they are signally deficient. How coarse is their abuse of their opponents; how deficient in taste and culture their style; how absolute their bondage to party; how fierce are they when fighting under its banner, and how wanting in manly independence on other occasions! There are, of course, honorable exceptions, but I am speaking of a general fact, not of exceptional cases. If we compare in these respects the daily newspaper press of New York, for instance, with that of London or Paris, the difference will be found to be very striking and not at all to the advantage of our own principal city.

The London Times, although far from being immaculate in all particulars, gives to every cause a fair hearing. Its editorials are models of style and decorum, and some of them have been republished in the form of interesting and instructive volumes, while those of the Pall Mall Gazette and other daily journals are scarcely inferior, and the best of the Paris papers not only sparkle with wit, but are marked by high literary merit.

In periodicals of a purely literary character, the weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies, the advantage will be found to be still more on the side of Europe. Indeed the best and most interesting periodicals we have, are those which are merely reprints of articles which have appeared in foreign journals.

But as periodical literature necessarily occupies an inferior position, let us consider what place is accorded in the world to American works of a higher character.

The question which the reverend and witty Sidney Smith scornfully asked, some fifty years ago, in the pages of the Edinburgh Review, which so offended our national pride, "Who reads an American book?" has since then been satisfactorily answered. Every one who reads the English language now reads American books. Uncle Tom's Cabin has been translated into many languages, and has been more universally read in Europe than any other modern work. In Great Britain Longfellow is with the mass of readers, not the select few, the most popular of living poets, and Poe, Irving, Prescott, Emerson, Motley, Hawthorne, and others are read and admired. Still it has been said, and must be admitted to be true, that no great original genius has yet appeared in the United States. We have had no Shakspeare nor Milton nor Byron nor Burns nor Tennyson, no Scott nor Thackeray

nor Dickens, no Bacon nor Locke nor Newton, and among all our clever and strong-minded women we have had no Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Great geniuses indeed are rare and special gifts of God, or, at least, their appearance is regulated by a law which we do not understand, for they will not come at our bidding, and cannot be created by any system of education or training whatever; but when sent they may perish from want of culture and nourishment, as the hardiest plants as well as the loveliest flowers require a congenial soil and climate, and may be scorched by the sunshine, or nipped by the frost, or starved on the barren rock. In order that we may have a nobler literature, and that our writers and thinkers, whether they be great geniuses or only gifted men, may occupy the same vantage-ground as those of the old world, with all the knowledge of the world within their reach, they should not only be highly educated scholars themselves, but have the quickening association of kindred minds, which is the very life of progress; and for such we must look to the colleges and universities of the land. The chief glory of a people is their distinguished men, and especially their great writers and thinkers, and the more democratic institutions become, the more is this distinction felt and appreciated; for, in spite of our theory of political equality, we are so constituted that we delight to look up to something which we recognize as greater, better and wiser than ourselves; and as in America the distinctions of rank and title are happily swept away, we can only gratify this natural instinct by paying a just homage to exalted merit. We sometimes, it is true, set up false idols, but it is because for a time our imagination invests them with noble qualities which they do not

possess; and while the delusion lasts, we pay an honest worship.

It is often said that republics are ungrateful—and perhaps they are—but they are far less so than individuals, for there is a generous impulse in great masses of men, when they are not swayed by prejudice or passion, which delights in doing justice; and the American republic has not hitherto proved ungrateful to those who have done good service with either pen or sword. How highly literary merit is appreciated among us is seen in the political career of such men as Wirt, Paulding, Kennedy, Irving, Everett, Hawthorne, Bancroft, Marsh and Motley.

In no other country of the world would great writers and thinkers be so cordially welcomed and so generously rewarded as in this, for no where else is there such a nation of readers. Here there is no need nor room for patrons or patronage. If a true king of men, an inspired singer, with a genius like that of Dante, Shakspeare or Goethe, should appear among us, to interpret to us our life, as only a poet can, and to elevate our ideal to a height worthy of a great nation, his name would be on every lip, and his image and his words in every heart, from the granite hills of New England to the orange groves of Florida—from the verdant shores of the Chesapeake to the golden placers of California.

For great writers we can perhaps afford to wait, because we have received from England, with her noble language, a literature which, in richness, depth and power, has never been equalled in the world; and the intellectual debt we owe to that country, instead of diminishing, is increasing from day to day. And although a condition of intellectual dependence of one nation upon another is neither honorable nor advantageous to the dependent party, it is

fortunate for us that we are not left entirely to our own resources.

But can we afford to wait for the influence of high-toned and educated men in the administration of public affairs? This is an important question; but before I devote a few minutes to its consideration, permit me to go back a good many years to an occasion like the present when I was a student at college.

In the year 1830—thirty-nine years ago—I was a member of the junior class of Rutgers College, and listened, with intense interest, to an address which a very eminent and eloquent gentleman of this State, Mr. William Wirt, then delivered before the literary societies of that institution. It made a profound impression not only on the students, but on all who heard it, and I can say with gratitude, that it has had an influence for good on my whole life. Like the other writings of Mr. Wirt, it is characterized by a kindly feeling, especially towards the young, by a lofty patriotism, by high aspirations towards excellence, and by an earnest conviction of the power of human will and effort.

After vividly depicting the dangers which then menaced the nation, growing out of political corruption, the conflict of local interests and the collisions between the Federal and State authorities, he said:

“Thus, gentlemen, you perceive that your lot has been cast in stormy times, and every political indication warns you that the quality which above all others you should seek to cultivate is strength of character; strength of character as displayed in firmness of decision and vigor of action.

“If, gentlemen, (he continued) you were about to embark in the voyage of life, on a summer’s sea, in a

barge like that of Cleopatra, with zephyrs only to fan, and soft music and sweet perfumes to breathe around you, I might recommend it to you to give yourselves up entirely to the culture of those bland and gentle accomplishments which contribute to cheer and sweeten social intercourse. But I foresee, distinctly, that you will have to double Cape Horn in the winter season, and to grapple with the gigantic spirit of the storm which guards that cape; and I foresee as distinctly that it will depend entirely on your own skill and energy whether you will survive the fearful encounter, and live to make a port in the mild latitudes of the Pacific."

This startling prophesy, which rang in our ears thirty-nine years ago, has come true to the letter. The young men of that day, and of after days, who lived to take part in the great events of the last ten years, have, indeed, been compelled to double Cape Horn in the winter season and to grapple with the gigantic spirit of the storm which guards that cape; and while many—ah, how many—have perished in the fearful encounter, those who survive have not yet made a port in the mild latitudes of the Pacific.

Gentlemen of St. John's College, after all that has been done and suffered since the solemn warning of Mr. Wirt was addressed to my fellow-students and myself, would words of similar import be appropriate from me to-day, or should I rather speak to you, as I would most gladly do, in the language only of encouragement and hope? No one can penetrate the secrets of the future, and, at most, we can only speculate doubtfully about coming events, aided by the lights of the past and of those, brighter and nearer, which are reflected from the horizon around us.

We must beware of expecting too much. Entire contentment cannot be experienced under any form of government, and would not be desirable even if it were possible, because, as every system, however good, is necessarily imperfect, absolute contentment would destroy the desire of improvement, which is the strongest motive for exertion. Everywhere in Europe, so far as my knowledge and observation extend, there is dissatisfaction, and generally deep dissatisfaction, with the existing governments, because everywhere there are deficiencies and evils, more or less acutely felt, which every individual complains of and seeks to have remedied.

The historian Gibbon, after a wide survey of the governments of mankind, comes to the conclusion, which would be very sad if it were sound, that "if a man were called to fix the period during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus,"—about one hundred years—and he assigns as a reason for this opinion "that the vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom." But the happiness and prosperity, such as they were, which the Romans then experienced, were those of a degraded people who were unfit for the liberties they had lost, and, being the fruits of a season of quiet, enjoyed under the shelter of a benign though absolute despotism, they were liable at any moment to be destroyed, as in fact they were destroyed, by the advent to power of a stupid and ferocious tyrant. Not such, not such is the rule under which freemen would submit to live !

I have dwelt on these considerations for the purpose of bringing before your minds the truth that difficulties and dangers are incidental to every government, and that we should be very unreasonable if we were to suppose that ours could be exempt from them; especially now when we have just emerged from a civil war of vast magnitude, and have not escaped the demoralization and sectional animosity which such a contest always produces.

Now what is the general condition of affairs at present, as compared with what it was when Mr. Wirt warned his hearers of the troubles which were then impending? In one important respect at least it is better, and in others it must be admitted to be worse. I must be very brief here, and give you conclusions rather than the reasons on which they are founded.

A perpetual source of sectional strife which then existed, has been removed forever. I refer to slavery. That institution separated the whole nation into two hostile and irreconcilable parties, and not only drew a line of demarcation deep and wide between the North and South, but divided the North itself into an over-bearing and victorious majority and an angry and defeated minority, and thus intensified everywhere the bitterness of party spirit, which has done more than anything else to degrade and corrupt our political institutions. In a country so vast as this, and with so many conflicting opinions and interests in the different parts, it is difficult to foresee that any one question can hereafter for a long time separate the people into two geographical parties, or into any two parties, so violently opposed to each other as those which have heretofore existed.

If this be a correct view, as I think it is, certainly our political condition, in one very important particular, has

greatly improved; but in other respects it has not improved. In the fierce scramble for place and office, which is forever going on, we have, I fear, almost ceased to believe in disinterested patriotism. Our public men have lost to a remarkable extent their hold on the public mind, no doubt because they deserved to lose it; so that the people are now literally without leaders on whom they rely, and have come to care very little what any of their statesmen think or say. It was not so in the days of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Clay, Calhoun and Webster, and it is a great misfortune that it is so now.

Our elections, too, which were once our glory, are now our shame, for they have fallen more and more under the control of unprincipled combinations of politicians, who divide the offices among themselves and their friends, and thus corrupt and incompetent men are placed in power.

If party spirit shall ever materially diminish, this evil will correct itself; for as soon as voters will refuse to support for office men known to be unworthy, although they are the nominees of their party, and rather than do so will vote for those on the opposite side, it will compel the nomination of suitable candidates by both parties. And the difficulty of the situation is increased by the fact that it seems destined very soon to become a settled principle that every man, without reference to race, education or property, is entitled to a vote.

Now, what is the remedy? Clearly none but in the education of the whole people; and in applying the remedy, the primary school, the high school, the normal school, the college and the university must go hand-in-hand. Indeed, in the nature of things, there can be none other. Artificial checks and balances, on which theoretic-

cal statesmen have been accustomed to rely so much, always break down when the strain comes. They are breaking down in England and France now, notwithstanding monarchical institutions, an aristocracy, an established church, and a standing army. In this country they would be swept away like chaff before the whirlwind, because the people have the power, and will exercise it, and the only hope of safety, therefore, is in so educating them that they may exercise it wisely and well.

Gentlemen, these matters address themselves especially to you, because you will soon be taking your places on the broad stage of the world, and you cannot, if you would, evade the responsibility which will rest upon you. You will be very differently situated from many young men whom I have seen in Europe, whose great want was that of a "*career*," as it is called. They had education, refinement, social position, but there seemed to be no place for them in life, and so they had become mere idlers, dangles of the saloon and ball-room, seekers after pleasure or dilettanti. As the world was nothing to them, so they were nothing to the world, and their highest aspiration was for nothing loftier than a commission in the army or navy, a subordinate civil employment, or, still better, the prize of a rich wife; but, as such prizes are not very numerous anywhere, many were doomed to disappointment.

This is fortunately not your position, for every well educated American youth has a career marked out by Providence, and a noble one, if he chooses to pursue it properly. Life was never better worth living than it is in America now, for there never was an ampler field for manly, individual effort than there is in this country to-day. Whatever may be your calling, you should aim at

excellence, not to gratify the poor ambition of outstripping your contemporaries, but because you are bound to do the best with all the faculties, whether they be great or small, with which you are endowed. You need not be statesmen or politicians, but, as educated men, you will have political influence which, if you are true to yourselves and your country, you will exercise for good in the sphere in which you may move. But let me warn you that you must not gather your garments about you as scholars have so often done, and some times do now, and exclaim with Horace, "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*" On the contrary, you should cultivate a large and generous sympathy with your fellow-men and with all their wants and interests, and adopt the nobler sentiment, of the dramatic poet, "*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto,*" or still better, the sublime Christian precept, "*Honor all men.*" You will find, so wide is the field of knowledge, that all you can ever know is very small, indeed, in comparison with that of which you are ignorant, and that the humblest person you may meet can give you useful instruction in many things.

The great experiment made in this country of the capacity of a people to govern themselves has not proved a failure; for which let us thank God and take courage. We have not, indeed, escaped the horrors of civil war, but, sooner or later, the war was inevitable, for it arose from a conflict of irreconcilable interests and opinions which could be settled in no other way. It is time, therefore, that we should cease to dwell with bitterness on the irritating causes and incidents of the strife, and that we should make earnest efforts to derive all the benefits possible, from the results which have followed.

It is true that the experiment has not yet been fully tried, and that many have lost faith, and almost hope, in the future ; but there are many more—and to that number I am more than glad to say that I belong—who think that they can discern through the dark clouds that environ us, a cheering light still shining beyond. The clouds are the pestilential exhalations of passion, prejudice, ignorance and vice ; but, now that the storm which has swept over the land has well nigh spent its fury, we may hope that they will gradually disperse and disappear, as storm-clouds always do, while the light—the blessed light of knowledge and virtue will certainly grow brighter and steadier, just in proportion to the faithfulness of the efforts made for the better education of the whole people.

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